

AUGUST 2025

# KALAVINKA

A NEWSLETTER OF EKOJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE

**OBON 2025 WAS GREAT – EVEN WITH THE UNEXPECTED 30 MINUTE THUNDER AND LIGHTENING THAT DROVE EVERYONE INTO THE TEMPLE .  
THANK YOU ALL FOR HANGING WITH US.  
NAMO AMIDA BUTSU**



OBON DANCING



THANK YOU BONBU STORIES FOR YOUR IMPROMPTU ENTERTAINMENT WHEN WE HAD TO MOVE INSIDE THE TEMPLE



FOR HATSUBON SERVICE



FULL HOUSE IN THE TEMPLE



GROUP SHOT AFTER OBON SERVICE, (PHOTO BY MICHIO)



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**Editor's Note:** Rev. Kurt Rye, Ekoji's Supervising Minister, is taking a well deserved break for August after overseeing Obon observance at Ekoji, New York Buddhist Church, and the Seabrook Buddhist Temple. With her permission, we are reprinting Rev. Candice Shibata's article in the July 2025 *Karma*, the newsletter of the Buddhist Church of Stockton.

At Ekoji, we have just had our Obon Festival and Service. While Obon is a Memorial time for us to express our gratitude and remembrance to our loved ones for all they have done and meant to us, as householder Buddhists, it is also a quiet time of sorrow and, for our Hatsubon families, a time for personal grief because their loved ones are missed so very much. Rev. Shibata's article addresses our mixed emotions and helps us see these emotions in perspective. Again, we thank Rev. Shibata for sharing the Dharma with us. KHN



## **84,000 THOUGHTS**

### **HOW DO WE MEET GRIEF?**

**By Rev. Candice Shibata,  
Resident Minister of the Buddhist Church of Stockton**

Growing up I heard that deaths happen in 3's. An old wives' tale or perhaps a superstition? Although, as Jodo Shinshu Buddhists we are encouraged to not believe in wives' tales or superstitions, this condition of impermanence in my life and for those close to me, became a harsh reality. Sadly, my brother's passing occurred in March, my dear uncle passed away in May, and one of my best friends (Doreen) lost her mother in June. Each of these deaths have deeply affected me, and I feel like my grief has been impacted by the preceding and by the following passing of each loved one.

I have known my best friend, Doreen, since college. I was a transfer student from San Joaquin Delta College and was preparing to transfer to California State University, Sacramento. I was introduced to Doreen by our mutual best friend, Valerie, as they were classmates pursuing degrees in speech pathology and audiology, respectively. Doreen and I hit it off right away and before I knew it, the three of us were arranging to move into an off-campus townhouse together in Sacramento.

I had the pleasure of meeting Doreen's parents, Anthony and Marjorie, shortly after we met and they always welcomed me to their home in Vallejo. They treated and loved me and our friends like their own daughters. They were very-hard working parents and commuted to San Francisco from Vallejo for work in the hospitality and hotel industry. They looked forward to their retirement to rest, relax, and travel together.

( [Meeting Grief](#) – Cont. on Pg. 2 )

( *Meeting Grief* -- Cont.from Pg 1)

Shortly after Uncle Anthony's retirement, he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. In the midst of his treatment and as he urged his daughter to continue planning, Doreen was preparing for her wedding as well. While I was attending the Institute of Buddhist Studies for graduate school, Doreen's father lost his battle to pancreatic cancer just three months following her wedding day.

Doreen's mother suffered a major stroke nine years ago and she became the primary caretaker for Aunty Marjorie. Although it was a very trying time for their family, Doreen mentioned that this time was a precious opportunity for them to spend time together and for Doreen to care for her mother, as her mother lovingly took care of her when she was little. To our surprise, Aunty Marjorie was admitted to the hospital on May 30, 2025. It was determined that she suffered a heart attack and was also diagnosed with pneumonia. I was fortunate to have the day off and I traveled to Vacaville to visit Doreen and her mother on June 2<sup>nd</sup>. Later that evening, I was told that Aunty Marjorie passed away.

We never know when impermanence will strike and leave us in unimaginable pain of losing a parent or a loved one. While on the phone with our two mutual best friends, I remember repeating "Are you sure??? I was just there. I just saw her... I just saw her." I immediately thought about Doreen and could not imagine how she was feeling as I realized, cried, and said, "Both of her parents are gone. She doesn't have her parents anymore."

The Buddhist doctrinal part of me says that Doreen's parents are always with and guiding her. They are no longer suffering from the ailments of birth, old age, sickness, and death. They are no longer blinded by greed, anger, and ignorance and they see things just as they are as enlightened beings. Yes, doctrinally this is true, and I believe this as a Buddhist minister.

However, the best friend and pastoral care giver in me also acknowledges that Doreen is not in a place to hear and receive this point of view just yet. Her grief is raw and she is still in disbelief that her mother has passed away. So, how do we comfort our friends when they have experienced such a loss?

Perhaps like Amida Buddha, what I can strive to do is meet Doreen just where she is at in her grief. Just be there. Support her with the basics like bringing over her favorite foods to encourage her to eat. Just sit with listening ears and open arms as needed. Accept where she is now, how she is feeling, and just embrace her with love and compassion as she learns how to navigate and maneuver through these uncharted waters.

As we know, there is no guidebook when dealing with death. Maybe we can just meet our friends and loved ones where they are at, sit together with their grief, and tell them we love them.

***In gassho, Namo Amida Butsu***



## DESCRIPTION

Everything changes, including Buddhism itself. There is no such thing as Buddhism in the singular, only many Buddhisms in the plural. In the four sessions of this seminar, we will start by visiting Sakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism in India, then fly over China and Korea and land in Japan, where we will examine the major Buddhist denominations, all of whom share some similarities but are also wonderfully different. Join us on this tour of the variegated Buddhist landscape in Japan, where we will learn, once again, that everything changes.



## LECTURER

George Tanabe is Professor Emeritus of Japanese Religion at the University of Hawaii. His books have been published by university presses at Harvard, Hawaii, Columbia and Princeton. The Japanese government has honored him with the Foreign Minister's Award (2007) and the Imperial Order of the Rising Sun (2012). In 2025, the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii named him as one of the Living Treasures of Hawaii. He has published his first novel, *Miki's Mad* (available through Amazon Books), and remains active as President of BDK (Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai) Hawaii and BDK America.

## SCHEDULE

Hybrid Series, Wednesday, 7pm ET

August 6 Sakyamuni (In person or Zoom)

August 13 Tendai and Shingon (Zoom)

August 20 Hōnen and Shinran (Zoom)

August 27 Dōgen and Nichiren (Zoom)

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**EKOJI'S VIRTUAL "DHARMA BREEZE" PROGRAM OF A SERVICE AND DISCUSSION WITH REV. KURT RYE WILL BE HELD EVERY WEDNESDAY EVENING, AT 7:00 PM.**



WEDNESDAYS  
7 PM ET  
EKOJI.ORG

**DHARMA BREEZE WILL INCLUDE: 3-MINUTE MEDITATION, CHANTING, DHARMA MESSAGE AND A SHORT DISCUSSION.**

**RSVP FOR THE ZOOM INFO USING THIS LINK:**

**[HTTPS://US02WEB.ZOOM.US/MEETING/REGISTER/TZMLCOGSQT0TGDIRTNT5EYDBZXK9F20VZJO](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tzmlcogsqt0tgdirtnt5eydbzxk9f20vzjo)**



## BUILDING COMMUNITY: EVERY LINK IN THE CHAIN COUNTS

By: Andrea Chapman, President

As part of the degree I am pursuing, I recently engaged in the task of creating an organizational chart for Ekoji Buddhist Temple. My initial thought was to easily assemble it using Canva, my go-to online graphic tool. However, I soon realized the complexity of identifying a single most important person within our community. Ultimately, I placed our temple trustees at the pinnacle, followed by our executive committee, members at large, supervising minister, ministerial assistants, lay leaders, committee chairs, and volunteers. Remarkably, all but one of these roles are filled by dedicated volunteers.

In this exercise, I was reminded of something profound: each of us contributes uniquely to the temple's essence. We are like links in a golden chain, each holding the responsibility to keep our bond strong and luminous. This reflection embodies how deeply the Dharma has shaped my perspective, as I place equal value on every contribution, whether from a volunteer at Obon or a member of the executive board.

I am deeply grateful for everyone who manages the temple today, as well as those who have walked this path before us and those yet to discover the peace and joy we know as Sangha. When tasked with ranking, I struggled because Ekoji thrives through collective effort. It's a substantial endeavor that persists because each person contributes a part, creating a mosaic of programming that's gaining notice across the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) and from neighboring institutions aware of our innovative hybrid offerings and embrace of diversity.

The secret to our success lies in consistency. We each need to show up, not only in a manner that is expected but with the energy and purpose to share. While Obon 2025 didn't unfold exactly as planned, it embodied the essence of our core values: the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. I express heartfelt gratitude to the new faces who joined us and to our seasoned chairpersons and team captains, whose profound expertise enriches the subtleties of Obon.

Every participant, in their way, left a mark on Obon 2025, shaping not only the present but also the future festivals. We are all interconnected, working collectively to achieve our goals, sustain this sacred space, and thoughtfully plan for what lies ahead.

***Namo Amida Butsu***

# OBON 2025 – ABSOLUTELY GREAT WITH OUR SANGHA COMING TOGETHER



Pictures by Evan Michio Cantwell and Brant Horio

**SEE YOU NEXT JULY AT OBON 2026**



**UPON THEIR SHOULDERS  
EKOJI'S PAST -- OUR PRESENT  
NAMO AMIDA BUTSU**

The first Sunday of every month, Ekoji conducts a SHOTSUKI SERVICE in memory of those people whose date of death (meinichi) falls in that month. The Kalavinka provides a list in remembrance of Ekoji's members and friends who passed away during the month of the issue. Your Ekoji Buddhist Temple exists because of their devotion and efforts as they become a part of our Nembutsu history.

This Service is not for those who have passed away because they are already taken care of by the fulfillment of the 18<sup>th</sup> Vow, but it provides us an opportunity to remember, express our gratitude and reflect on their continuing influence on our lives.

Traditionally special family memorial services are held on specific years following the death of a loved one. It allows us, as a family, to remember once again those who passed away and to hear the Dharma together. Arrangements for Special Family Memorial Services may be arranged by contacting Ekoji at [ekoji.info@gmail.com](mailto:ekoji.info@gmail.com).

Based on the year of the passing of a loved one, for 2025 the years for Special Family Memorial Services are: 2024 – 1<sup>st</sup> Year; 2023 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Year; 2017 – 7<sup>th</sup> Year; 2011 – 13<sup>th</sup> Year; 2007 – 17<sup>th</sup> Year; 1999 – 25<sup>th</sup> Year; 1991 – 33<sup>rd</sup> Year; 1974 – 50<sup>th</sup> Year; 1924 – 100<sup>th</sup>.

**FOR THE MONTH OF AUGUST, WE WILL BE REMEMBERING WITH GRATITUDE:**

**JULY 2025**

Mitsu Yasuda Carl  
10/22/1924 – 7/13/2001  
John Malcolm  
7/2/2012

**AUGUST 2025**

**James Grohl**  
**12/9/1938 – 8/6/2014**  
**Kimiko “Kimi” Sugiyama**  
**12/5/1925 – 8/31/2013**  
**Maj. Charles “Chuck”**  
**Teubert, USMC, Ret.**  
**12/18/1950 - 8/21/2020**  
**Dr. Herbert “Herb”**  
**Kazuto Oie**  
**12/16/1933 - 8/31/2021**

**SEPTEMBER 2025**

Akiko Iwata  
9/27/1999



## EKOJI BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING HIGHLIGHTS – JULY 21, 2025

By Michael Paul Huff, Board Secretary

The July board meeting was full of energy, gratitude, and thoughtful planning for the future. Here are some of the highlights:

### **Obon Festival Recap**

Maya shared the great news that our Obon Festival exceeded expectations, with a preliminary net profit of around \$17,479, surpassing the \$15,000 target. Even with the rain delay, the festival was a success thanks to strong teamwork, creative problem-solving, and the support of our community. Maya emphasized that while the mini-sponsorships were a big help, the shrinking volunteer base is a concern for future festivals. A “hot wash” debrief meeting is scheduled for August to capture lessons learned and plan improvements.

### **Eastern District National Council Invitation.**

The board discussed the possibility of the Eastern District hosting the National Council Meeting. Andrea Chapman expressed concerns about the heavy workload, especially for a hybrid in-person/online event. The decision will likely be made at the Eastern District meeting on September 27 in Chicago or New York. Ekoji’s stance is cautious — we want to make sure our resources and volunteers are up to the challenge.

### **Eagle Scout Project**

A local Scout is preparing a project to transform the back patio area into a welcoming outdoor space for Dharma school classes and community gatherings. Once her plan is finalized and approved, the board will review and vote on it.

### **Facilities Updates**

- **Tree Maintenance:** Several damaged or dead trees need attention, especially one near the meditation garden. Jesse will inspect it this Sunday, and Frank will gather estimates from arborists if professional removal is necessary.
- **Deck Repairs:** The large deck is deteriorating and may need replacement, which could cost upward of \$30,000. Options include downsizing the deck or replacing it with a concrete patio. The board will seek estimates and consider future use of the space before making decisions.
- **Bathrooms:** A refresh for the men’s restroom is under consideration. Frank has a cleaning solution (“Zap”) to test on the grout, which may be a quick fix.

### **Sign and Security Cameras**

The board is moving forward with a new sign and security cameras, funded by a state safety grant. Permit costs have been unexpectedly high (around \$2,000), so Pilar is negotiating to lower the expense. Additional grant funds for cameras may arrive by February.



## MONTHLY TREASURER'S REPORT

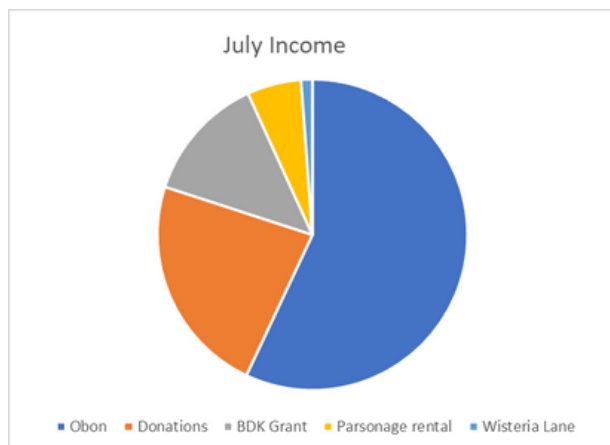
(June to July 29, 2025)

By Maya Horio, Treasurer

The Board presents this column to make transparent how we use sangha donations and our other income streams, and to illuminate the daily financial flows that happen behind the scenes, complementing the financial recap and outlook that we share at our annual sangha meeting each fall. We welcome your thoughts and questions, as directed to our temple Treasurer, Maya Horio, at [ekojitreasurer@gmail.com](mailto:ekojitreasurer@gmail.com).

**July 2025 Finance Flows:** Thank you to everyone who helped to make Ekoji's biggest annual fundraiser—our Obon festival—another success! Despite a lightning storm that caused us to stop the festivities and move everyone inside for about 45 minutes, we were able to raise a net profit of \$16,885, exceeding our target net profit of \$15,000. Pulling off a festival truly takes a village, and Ekoji's Obon leadership team and Board of Directors appreciated everyone who donated their time, money, and friends and family =) to help execute the event.

- **Income (\$27,500):** Our Obon income made up the biggest chunk of income this month, followed by an uptick in general donations and membership payments. Our monthly grant from BDK America, parsonage rental income, and sales from our restocked Wisteria Lane bookstore made up the rest of our income stream.
- **Expenses (\$15,293):** Facility costs went up slightly this month as we conducted our annual facility inspections and beautified the grounds in advance of the festival. Our personnel and honorarium payments also took a chunk of our expenses as we hosted the artist collective Bonbu Stories for a workshop the day prior to Obon. We had invited the Bonbu Stories artists to join us for our live singing of their song, "Lantern Song," and lucked out with their willingness to help entertain our guests during the impromptu indoor activities while we waited out the lightning storm. Obon expenses, BCA dues, and our online subscriptions and processing fees made up the rest of our outflow





# ECHO EKOJI TEMPLE PODCAST

*Music Is Our Universal Language*

SPECIAL GUEST  
KEMI NAKABAYASHI



CO-HOSTS  
JOE GOTCHY  
ANDREA CHAPMAN

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## JOIN EKOJI'S MOVIE DISCUSSION



*The Dharma speaks to us through the sounds of the world –  
Forcefully, eloquently and beautifully.  
It speaks of the unending change around us,  
The immutable truth of interdependence,  
And the peace in nature  
Do we have the ears to hear and listen...?  
(Rev. Kenryu T. Tsuji, *The Heart of the Buddha Dharma*, p. 67)*



Enjoy Ekoji's virtual movie discussions – They are held almost regularly on the third Sunday of each month and are led by Ann and Joran Stegner. The discussion is casual, may wander away from the movie a lot, but it is always a chance hear the Dharma through the movie and the discussion, regardless of whether it was on topic.

We'll meet next on **Sunday, August 17th at 2 pm**, and will discuss **two short films based on Roald Dahl's stories: The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar and The Swan** (there are two other shorts in the series as well). Both are available on Netflix.

**Join the Zoom Movie Discussion**  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84021310685>

**Meeting ID: 840 2131 0685**

## **EDITOR'S KIBITZING**

*By Ken Nakamura*

### **A LOOK AT BUDDHIST MUSIC AT EKOJI**

There was a time early in Ekoji's life when we heard and sang a variety of Buddhist gathas or songs when we went before the Naijin to do Gassho, or as a regular part of the Sunday service, or during a special service such as a funeral, something we are only recently starting to do again.

At that time, we were very much an ethnic Japanese American temple, with most of the members growing up in, or being part of a Jodo Shin temple before moving to Washington. Those songs were very much a part of our connection to and expression of our religiosity as Buddhists. As you would imagine, the themes touched on and reflected general Buddhist and Shin Buddhist thought. They were, in many ways, a means for us to learn about and express our faith in Buddhism. "Softly Blew the Breezes," was a song we sang at Hanamatsuri Services, and it was about the birth of Siddhartha. "Nadame" was one of two Japanese songs generally sung during funerals and finding consolation, even in our grief, that our loved one is no longer part of this world of Samsara but one with Amida, the Universal Truth. Of course, the odd part is that even if the family didn't understand Japanese, we sang those songs anyway because of the music, the melody, and everyone singing together to try and provide solace and comfort to the family.

#### **"THE DAY THE MUSIC DIED (lyrics from Don McLean's American Pie)"**

There came a time, however, when we stopped singing at Ekoji -- for two to three years. Our early ministers, Rev. Tsuji and Rev. Honda, set the tone of the temple that Buddhism and Shin Buddhism were not meant only for Japanese Americans, or just for Asians, but for everyone. The truths that our religion held were universal and were meant to meet the spiritual and life concerns of all. Under their stewardship, the doors were open to everyone, and the temple and all of us, benefited from the growth in size and diversity of what our Sangha has become and is becoming.

But this growth and diversity carried its own "double-edged sword," for we all carry our own emotional baggage that influences us in our thinking and our actions. For some people who came to the temple from a different religious tradition, they saw us as "Christian-light." They asked why do we sit in chairs lined up like pews, instead of on the floor, and our services are much like what they were leaving, and Amida seemed to be a stand-in for Jesus. And many of our Gathas or songs, could pass for Christian hymns -- like "Buddha Lord in Thine Embrace" -- great melody but the words were ....

*Music at Ekoji* -- Cont. on Pg. 11

On the Japanese American side of the story, many of the things we did then and some we still do, grew out of our history of racial discrimination in pre-World War II and, even some, after the war. My parents and grandparents made efforts to sound and be more Americans. We, for instance, became Buddhist Churches until about the early 1960s when we started to renaming ourselves as “Buddhist Temples”. I’m not sure, but even in the early 1900’s, I don’t think that we ever sat on the floor Seiza style. But we were comfortable with the ritual and the songs that made up a Japanese American religion.

But as more and more people were “kicking the tires” at Ekoji to see if there was resonance with their spiritual needs, some of us were concerned that they might leave the temple because of first impressions, without really listening to what Jodo Shin Buddhism could mean for them. We put more explanations out in English, and we stopped singing gathas. If you have ever noticed, Japanese Americans generally don’t sing or chant very loudly anyway.

### **WE STARTED SINGING AND HAVING MUSIC AT EKOJI AGAIN.**

As Bob Dylan sang, “and the times they are a changin...” and they certainly were, and still are. In the mid-1990s, there were new winds that were blowing, and they still are, as the causes and conditions about gathas were shifting. The late Linda Castro of Seattle Buddhist Temple composed gathas in English that had great lyrics touching the Dharma, and were easy and enjoyable to sing. She composed songs like “A Special Place,” “the Bodhi Tree”, “A Flower Grows”, and “Ganjin’s Journey,” which opened the way for other composers like Donna Sasaki of Oregon, who composed many new gathas like “We Are One.”

There were groups in various parts of the country, like the Hawaii Kyodan Music Committee, led by Francis Okano and others, and the BCA’s Music Committee, led by Kemi Nakabayashi (hear her on this month’s [Echo Ekoji](#) podcast) who are doing great work in creating new music and translating or adding new lyrics to old melodies like “Namo Amida Butsu,” revised by Nancy Hashimoto.

The environment around us was changing quickly, and we were changing within Ekoji also. Importantly, some of our Japanese American Sangha members said we should sing again because they missed the emotional connection with the Dharma and the Sangha that they got through music and singing. It was far past time to rethink the role of music at Ekoji.

### **WHERE ARE WE NOW?**

Time had passed since we stopped singing, and our Sangha kept growing with new members who were coming from other religious traditions. Bringing music back in to the temple proved more difficult than imagined. Even though new music was there, much of our Sangha didn’t grow up with Buddhist songs and weren’t sure how to sing them. Also, while we had a piano, we didn’t have a regular pianist. So we still don’t sing very much.

Thanks to Kemi and her BCA Committee, we can bring some of the old and new gathas back into the temple digitally on the large screens at the front of the Hondo.

We have started singing "Ondokusan II", "We Are One", "The Bodhi Tree," and "A Flower Grows," led by Kemi's on-line presentations. At Ekoji, Brant Horio is working on new gathas using Artificial Intelligence (See the July Kalavinka for Brant's discussion of new Buddhist music with AI as a partner).

More seems on the way. There are many ways to explain and feel the Dharma around us. If Amida is speaking to us always, it would be through music also. As householder Buddhists, there are many ways to touch our minds and heart. The emotive strength of music can help us to make that faith leap with an entrusting heart to be one with the non-rejecting, Wisdom and Compassion that is Amida, the Universal Truth.

**NAMO AMIDA BUTSU**



**JOIN OUR TEMPLE**

**THE EKOJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE -- THE TEMPLE OF THE GIFT OF LIGHT**

**We are committed to growing a worldwide Sangha and invite you to join our diverse community. Explore the benefits of membership by visiting our membership portal at:  
<http://ekojibuddhisttemple.wildapricot.org>**

**ALL OUR WELCOME -- COME AS YOU ARE**

**(EDITOR'S NOTE:** This article is reprinted, with minor editor's deletions, with the permission of the author, Mr. Francis Okano, the longtime Chair of the Hawaii Kyodan Music Committee. It was originally printed in the Music Committee's July 2012 newsletter, Musical Notes. We are truly grateful for Mr. Okano and the Newsletter for allowing us to share this history of the difficult development of English Gathas in Hawaii.  
KHN

## ENGLISH GATHAS IN HAWAII

By Francis Okano  
(Chair, Hawaii Kyodan Music Committee)



*In May[2012], I was privileged to speak at the Hawaii Book and Music Festival at Honolulu Hale. On a panel on Buddhist music, I traced the outlines of how English gathas in Hawaii came to be. I share my remarks in the hope they may shed light on where we are today:*

I am delighted by this opportunity to share with you, as best I can, the growth of Buddhist songs in the Hongwanji in Hawaii.

Asian vocal and instrumental music has a very long and very rich history -- and I am glad that is not my topic! Rather, my subject goes back not thousands but only one hundred years or so. My focus is the Buddhist hymn, as a borrowed form from the Christian church. In Hawaii these hymns are called gathas, or "verses in praise of the Buddha." In Japan, they are referred to as sanbutsuka, or "songs in praise of the Buddha." And what distinguish them from other songs are the Buddhist lyrics.

In Meiji Japan, the fascination with things western probably led Honzan (Jodo Shinshu Headquarters) in Kyoto to try western-style singing in the service. Competing against centuries-old chanting, however, the sanbutsuka probably got off to a slow start.



In Hawaii, however, English gathas must have taken off like a rocket in the mid-1920s when the progressive-minded Bishop Yemyo Imamura, looking to Americanize the Hongwanji in Hawaii, encouraged Ernest Hunt and English-fluent Caucasian Buddhists to create gathas. Rev. Ernest Hunt was a Hongwanji minister ordained by Bishop Imamura. Rev. Hunt worked tirelessly to spread general Buddhism to the English-speaking.

[English Gathas in Hawaii](#). Cont on Pg 14

In the *Vade Mecum*, a liturgical guide assembled by Hunt in the 1920s to mid-1930s, are listed over 100 lyrics, of which many were set to music and sung. These flowing, if Christian-sounding, words and tunes had titles as “Lord Buddha Speaks to Me”, “When We See the Golden Sun”, “How Glorious is Thy Dharma”, “Buddha Lord in Thine Embrace” “Climb the Path with Gladness”, etc. Lyrics were by the talented Ernest and Dorothy Hunt, Paul Carus, Raymond Zorn, Gloria Wall, and others. Music was mainly by the St. Andrews Cathedral organist, R.R. Bode, who was broad-minded as to also direct the first Hawaii Betsuin choir. Among early composers were also two Nisei band teachers, C. Izumi and Y.M. Uyeda, whose “Right Meditation” and “Evening Gatha”, respectively, are still beloved today.

So, who was this Japanese priest who inspired a burst of Anglican activity? Bishop Yemyo Imamura was officially the second bishop of the Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii. In over 32 years in office, he almost single-handedly sank deep roots for the temple in Hawaii. Born into a rural temple in Fukui Prefecture, Japan, Rev. Imamura received a progressive education at Honzan’s Liberal Arts School in Kyoto. Later at Keio University in Tokyo, he came under the influence of educator Yukichi Fukuzawa who exhorted students to learn western thought. When he came to Hawaii in 1899, Rev. Imamura sought not only to nurture the Issei immigrants in a foreign land but also to make the Hongwanji a lasting ‘abode of light’ for future English-speaking generations in their homeland.

In 1918, he started the Hongwanji English Department to which he later [in 1927] appointed Rev. Hunt as head. Also, in 1918 Bishop Imamura installed in the new Hawaii Betsuin temple a pipe organ, the first ever in the world for a Buddhist temple. With such openness to the untried, Bishop Imamura enabled the flowering of western music in temples in Hawaii – and possibly in Japan too....

Bishop Imamura’s fatal heart attack in 1932 stunned Hawaii and proved a setback. For, a few years later, the Hawaii Hongwanji reversed course and closed the English Department. Coupled with World War II and the shutdown of most temples (from ministers’ internment), music growth in Hawaii became stunted for more than a decade.

After the War, as if by miracle, a refreshing musical breeze blew in from California. A few ministers’ wives, talented musicians all, collected themselves after release from wartime internment and picked up where the Hunts left off. Among the composers was Bishop Imamura’s daughter-in-law, Jane Matsuura, who was married to Kanmo Imamura, who would become the Hawaii Hongwanji’s first Nisei bishop in 1967. This group of young and energetic composers produced a host of delightful gathas in English in the late 1940s through the 1950s that had a less Christian and more Jodo Shinshu flavor. As young mothers too, they created many children’s gathas for Sunday School, such as “Sunbeams”, “Remember?”, “Buddha Loves You”, “Amida’s Children”, etc. Hawaii gratefully embraced these gathas.

And how did the Hawaii Hongwanji fare after the War? It also responded to the need for English gathas -- in at least two organized ways. First, around the late 1950s, the Hongwanji began sponsoring English lyrics writing contests. The winning entries were set to music by professional composers in Japan or Hawaii.... This approach ... yielded such gems as “Diamond Faith”, “With These Hands”, “At Our Altar”, “Quest of Life”, “Flowers at Amida’s Altar”, “Law of Change”, “May Peace Prevail”.

Second, if we want English gathas that taste of Japan’s Jodo Shinshu heritage, why not translate Japanese lyrics so that they are singable? Why not aim for the best of both worlds – Old World flavors in New World terms? In the 1980s, temples began singing Japanese gathas in translation, songs with titles as “Wondrous Gift of Peace”, “Splendor of an Evening Sky”, “On This Morn”, “Evening Bell”, “In Amida’s Embrace”, and others. In the past decade, translators have produced English versions of contemporary Japanese choral arrangements.... To date there are more than 50 singable translations of these beautiful contemporary-sounding arrangements and traditional gathas combined.

Let us not forget that, throughout, there have stood talented individuals in the temple who have unselfishly offered their written songs for use by the temple. Delightful gathas from these composers bear such titles as “All Life is One”, “Offering”, “Like the Waves”, “Arigatai”, “Gentle Hands”, “Becoming Free”, “Awaken in Amida’s Light”, and more.

As you review the history of English gathas in Hawaii, you cannot help but feel the warmth and devotion with which people created gathas. A scan of gatha titles plainly shows gathas grew over time from a borrowed voice to a more authentic one.... While the future is limitless, the past has given us the emotional nurturing and spiritual strength that are the gathas and *sanbutsuka*.”



Hawaii Kyodan 2018 Choralfest with over 100 participants from around the state.



Wailuku Hongwanji Choir

## BRANT HORIO'S COMPOSITIONS WITH AI AS HIS PARTNER

### ECHOES IN THE TIDE

One of the first Dharma Remix projects I created was called Echoes in the Tide — a reflection on the Buddhist metaphor of the ocean and waves, and how it helped me live alongside grief, rather than be swept under by it.

It reminded me that waves — like our lives — are temporary.

Each one rises, crashes, and returns to the sea.

But the water continues. It flows back into the larger ocean, gives rise to new waves, and propels others already in motion.

In this way, the people we love don't disappear. Their influence lives through us — carried forward, just as we carry the currents of those who came before.

Death and loss, then, are not an end —

but part of a deeper, ongoing truth that is always moving, always present.



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### A Cost too High

Another Dharma Remix I created is called A Cost Too High.

It reflects on the truth of suffering — and the teaching that Enlightenment means the end of suffering, if we can let go of all attachment.

But for me, my human love for my children is everything.

And that's a cost I'm not willing to pay — not even for my own Enlightenment.

So I choose, with open eyes, to live a life that includes suffering.

Because with love comes loss. With joy, sorrow.

That's the cost. --- And also the gift.

*[And now, A Cost Too High.]*



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### **The Dharma takes many forms.**

What matters is how we meet it — and whether we listen.

And sometimes, the voice that helps us remember the truths within, doesn't come from where we expect.

Sometimes, it's a child.

Sometimes, a partner.

Sometimes — even AI.

Not as a teacher, but as a mirror.

One more way to listen differently.

- As if for the first time.
- As if it's only for us.
- As if it might be the last time.

So it might change us.

As we listen again, and again.

***Please join me in gassho.***

***Namo Amida Butsu***



In Gassho

Dana from June 27, 2025 through July 29, 2025

- |                             |  |                                    |
|-----------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| Jane Blechman               | Laverne Imori                          | Ken and Nori Nakamura              |
| Tasha and Thomas Brickhouse | Valeria Jacoba                         | Lisa and Greg Nakamura             |
| Carla Brown                 | Susan Kasa and Stephen Nishigawa       | Kim Nguyen and Hung Vo             |
| Eugenia Burkes              | Yuko Keicho                            | Diana Nguyen-Rivera                |
| Maxine Cain                 | Norm and Gail Kondo                    | Donna Omata                        |
| Evan Cantwell               | <i>(in memory of Shozo and Hatsuye</i> | Joyce and Robert Oshita            |
| Alexander Corbin            | <i>Kondo and James and Evelyn</i>      | Aileen and Lawrence Parmeter       |
| Joseph Crilley              | <i>Kitahara )</i>                      | Lani Pham and Pierre Karen         |
| Margaret Cummisky           | Keith Lowe                             | Lauren Rabil                       |
| <i>(in memory of Yoshie</i> | Sandra Lukic-Dapoingy                  | Jerry Rankin                       |
| <i>Cummisky)</i>            | Thea Maggard                           | Annemarie Russell                  |
| Margaret Cummisky           | Maya and Brant Horio                   | Edward Sams                        |
| Nen Daiko                   | Arlene and Wayne Minami                | Roger Scott                        |
| Mahkameh Doroud             | Bert and Nancy Motonaga                | Edgar Sullivan                     |
| Matthew Doubrava            | Reverend Brian Nagata                  | Frank Swithers                     |
| Eva DuGoff                  | Kemi Nakabayshi                        | Steven and Kathleen Terusaki       |
| Dana Fager                  | Kenton Nakamura                        | Tsuji Living Trust                 |
| Stanley Fujii               | Ken and Nori Nakamura                  | <i>(in memory of Rev. and Mrs.</i> |
| Hanmaum Seon Center of      | <i>(in memory of Janet Kuroda)</i>     | <i>Tsuji)</i>                      |
| Washington, D.C.            | Ken and Nori Nakamura                  | Pilar Uelmen                       |
| Connie Hoffman              | <i>(in memory of Kiyomi Nakamura)</i>  | Charles Uyeda                      |
| Marisa and Tamon Honda      | Ken and Nori Nakamura                  | Ngoc-Yen Vu                        |
| Emily Ihara                 | <i>(in memory of Rev. Eijun Kujo)</i>  | Mikio Yamashita                    |
| Kenneth Ikeda               |  |                                    |



## SANGHA SCOOPS

By Ken Nakamura



Congratulations to the Chapmans for their recent addition, Owen, to the family tree. Grandma Andrea rushed down to South Carolina to meet her new grandson, and to say “Hi” to daughter Ashley and her husband.

Andrea, the next time you talk to Ashley, please let her know that we all send our best wishes. And Andrea, some of us “grands” will tell you how great it is, and it is all true.

I wonder if it’s too early to call her Granny Andrea?

Most of the descendants of Rev. Shingetsu and Fusako Akahoshi gathered in San Mateo, CA for an Akahoshi family reunion over the weekend of July 25 - 27. Nori and Ken, and Brant, Maya, Connor and Nami added to the family count of close to 30 people covering three generations. This was a chance for the kids to get to know each other better, and for us ol’ folks to catch up on each other’s health, and what is going on. As always when the Akahoshis get together, it feels like non-stop eating, a lot of laughter, and, of course, there was a family service at the San Mateo Buddhist Temple.



*Nori and I with her remaining CA sister and brother and sister-in-law. Two older brothers in Japan were unable to come.*

**Editor Note:** Donna and her son drove out to the National Park and Aquatic Garden for the first time. Her report talks about the beauty of the trip, something we all might want to see. KHN

### BEAUTY IN WASHINGTON : WHERE LOTUS BLOOM IN ABUNDANCE

By Donna R. Omata

Annually during the summer months of July and August, exquisite lotus bloom in abundance at the National Park Service’s Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens, along the Anacostia River in the Anacostia Neighborhood of Northeast Washington, D.C. An adventurous car ride to view the breathtakingly beautiful lotus flowers promises to be worth the drive.



# CALENDAR OF EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES FOR AUGUST 2025

## WEEKLY

### SUNDAY

- HYBRID SERVICE, 11:00AM WITH AN AFTER-SERVICE HYBRID DHARMA DISCUSSION IN THE HONDO.

### WEDNESDAY

- DHARMA BREEZE ONLINE SERVICE, WILL BE ON HIATUS FOR THE MONTH OF AUGUST

### THURSDAY

- IN-PERSON MEDITATION GROUP, 7:30PM IN THE HONDO.

## MONTHLY

### FIRST SUNDAY

- TEMPLE CLEANUP, 9:30AM – 10:30AM, ALL ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE
- SHOTSUKI – DURING THE CHANTING OF A SUTRA, SANGHA MEMBERS WHO LOST A LOVED ONE DURING AUGUST OF ANY PRIOR YEAR ARE INVITED TO GO BEFORE THE NAIJIN TO OFFER GASSHO AND BURN INCENSE IN LOVING MEMORY AND GRATITUDE FOR THE PERSON WHO HAS PASSED.

### **SPECIAL EVENTS AND HOLIDAYS (DETAILS AT [WWW.EKOJI.ORG](http://WWW.EKOJI.ORG))**

- **FOUR PART EKOJI SEMINAR: “The many faces of Buddhism”, presented by Dr. George Tanabe**  
**PART I:** “SAKYAMUNI”, HYBRID EVENT, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6 AT 7:00PM IN THE HONDO AND ONLINE.  
**PART II:** “TENDAI AND SHINGON”, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 13 AT 7:00PM, ONLINE ONLY.  
**PART III:** “HONEN AND SHINRAN”, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 20 AT 7:00PM, ONLINE ONLY.  
**PART IV:** “DOGEN AND NICHIREN”, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 27 AT 7:00PM, ONLINE ONLY.
- BUDDHIST MOVIE GROUP DISCUSSION, “THE WONDERFUL STORY OF HENRY SUGAR” AND “THE SWAN”, SUNDAY, AUGUST 17 AT 2:00 PM IN THE EKOJI ZOOM ROOM.

### **MINISTER’S OFFICE HOURS**

- WEDNESDAY, 1:00PM TO 2:00PM
- SCHEDULE A ZOOM OR PHONE MEETING WITH REV. KURT RYE BY CALLING 703-239-0500 OR EMAILING [RYE.EKOJI@GMAIL.COM](mailto:RYE.EKOJI@GMAIL.COM)

*A Kalavinka is a mythical bird with the head of a human and a long flowing colorful tail. It lives in the Pure Land. It has a beautiful voice that sings praises of the Buddha, the sutras, and the words of the Buddha.*



**KALAVINKA**

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**REVEREND KURT RYE**

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Ed Sams

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